



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | Mark Johnson, Superintendent of Public Instruction

WWW.DPI.NC.GOV

TO: Directors, Exceptional Children Programs
EC Coordinators, Charter Schools

FROM: Sherry H. Thomas

DATE: May 15, 2020

CLARIFICATION AND GUIDANCE FOR SENIORS TO COMPLETE THE OCCUPATIONAL COURSE OF STUDY

On March 27, 2020 the State Board of Education (SBE) issued guidance for LEA/Charter School Guidance for Remote Learning, Evaluation of Student Progress, and Graduating Seniors. On April 23, 2020, the SBE finalized its end of year grading and student promotion policy. The next day, April 24, 2020, Governor Cooper extended the school building closures and announced that "North Carolina K-12 public school will continue remote learning through the end of the 2019-2020 school year".¹

These actions resulted in needed action to graduation requirements for the Occupational Course of Study (OCS). Although OCS work hours are not graded, the process should remain the same. If a student has not completed the 157 approved work hours, the opportunities for Seniors to pass this requirement are suggested below.

Best Practice Guidance for addressing the Occupational Course of Study (OCS) Work Hours Requirements during COVID-19

Best Practice for securing work hours associated with the OCS is to provide instruction in the standards associated with the Occupational Preparation I, II, III, and IV classes and to allow opportunities for the student to apply the skills associated with these classes in school-based, community-based, and paid employment settings. However, due to the current Stay-At-Home order in the state due to COVID-19, the face-to-face hands-on option for securing the required hours in a community setting has been deemed unsafe for students and staff. For this reason, alternate activities have been identified for seniors in the 2020 graduation cohort to assist them in garnering the remaining work hours needed for graduation.

Research Based Predictors of Postsecondary Employment: include, but are not limited to, occupational courses, paid employment/work hours, vocational or career and technical education, youth autonomy, and decision making, self-advocacy, self-determination, and student led IEPs.

Promising Practices of Postsecondary Employment: include, but are not limited to, career awareness, community experiences, high school diploma, social skills, career exploration, and soft skills training. Completion of the GRAD-004 OCS requirements results in a North Carolina High School Diploma. These alternate activities, as required by FAPE, must meet the standards of the SEA, including the requirements of IDEA (NC 1500-2.13 (b)).

¹ Press Release: Governor Cooper, State Education Leaders: Remote Learning to Continue Through End of 2019-2020 School Year. <https://governor.nc.gov/news/governor-cooper-state-education-leaders-remote-learning-continue-through-end-2019-2020-school>

EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN DIVISION

Sherry H. Thomas, Director | sherry.thomas@dpi.nc.gov

6356 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6356 | (984) 236-2550 | Fax (984) 236-2099

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Maintaining fidelity in the selection of meaningful and purposeful activities is necessary to support high standards of the SEA for all students. The purpose and intent of the work hours required throughout the high school grades are to help students build employability skills; to find and keep a job upon graduation.

An updated FAQ regarding OCS:

Question:	Response:	Resource:
How do we address high school seniors who need hours in other categories such as school-based and community-based?	<p>*The State Board of Education approved work hours change for the 2020 graduating class applies to paid work hours only.</p> <p>*LEAs may apply the activities and strategies used for paid work hours to garner other categories of required hours; however, there is no approved reduction of hours for any category other than the paid work hours.</p>	<p>Response located in the EC Directors Padlet</p> <p>*See 2020 FAQ COVID-19 doc</p>
What are some ways to determine how many hours are still required to meet the graduation requirement?	<p>*Review the student's history and documentation of all work hours garnered through March 13, 2020.</p> <p>*Review the student's course history and school activities to determine if there is documentation that the student has participated in other activities that may not have already been counted and fit in one of the six employability skills categories.</p> <p>*Such as: field trips to tour local industries; projects associated with school clubs; situational assessments and interviews with job coaches and/or VR Counselors; job fairs attended by the student; activities with school business partners; time spent preparing for and leading their IEP meeting, etc.</p>	<p>*Student's work hours documentation log</p> <p>*Student's IEP and/or transition folder</p> <p>*Notes in teacher's lesson plans</p> <p>*Notes from Job Coach and/or VR Counselor logs</p> <p>*Reference full GRAD-004 policy Excerpt of Section II</p> <p>6. Completion of 150 hours of school-based training with work activities and experiences that align with student's post school goals, 225 hours of community-based training, and 225 hours of paid employment or 225 hours of unpaid vocational training, unpaid internship, paid employment at community rehabilitation facilities, and volunteer and/or community services hours.</p>
How should hours be determined and counted?	<p>*Consider the amount of time the student engages in preparation for the activity, application of skills related to the activity, and completing the artifact for the activity.</p> <p>*For example: If a student is conducting an employer phone interview, count the time the student spent researching and developing the interview questions, conducting the interview with the employer, and summarizing the employer's responses.</p>	<p>Supported by practice for determining hours during pre-COVID-19.</p>

<p>How should the activities be selected, and the hours be documented?</p>	<p>*Review the Work Hours webinar notes located in the COVID-19 tab of the OCS LiveBinder.</p> <p>*Select activities using the resources located in the COVID-19 tab of the LiveBinder, including the Work Hours/Employability Skill Verification Tool and other tabs containing activities located in the LiveBinder.</p> <p>*Record the activities, hours, and date completed in the Work Hours/Employability Skill Verification Tool.</p> <p>*Maintain completed Work Hours/Employability Skill Verification Tool and artifacts in a notebook, jump drive, or on-line platform supported by your LEA.</p>	<p>OCS LiveBinder COVID-19 tab Work Hours Tool tab</p>
<p>How does grading apply to the work hours?</p>	<p>*Work hours are not assigned grades, but rather work hours are tracked and documented by the LEA to verify and determine that this graduation requirement has been completed or not completed.</p> <p>*Courses, such as Occupational Preparation, will be assigned a numeric grade OR PC-19 or WC-19 according to the grading guidance document.</p>	<p>OCS LiveBinder Guidance for Grading Seniors tab</p>
<p>What is the expectation of continued learning during school closure?</p>	<p>*NCDPI encourages LEAs and Charters to provide a variety of remote learning opportunities to engage all students, continue academic growth, and respond to social and emotional needs. It is paramount to remember the unprecedented condition students are learning in and to focus on engagement more than evaluation."</p> <p>**NCDPI encourages LEAs/Charters to use all means possible to support student learning that has been impacted by COVID-19 in the future, such as Credit Recovery and Repeating a Course for Credit (SBE-CCRE-001)."</p> <p>*Students will require a supported learning process if they have not garnered the required work hours to meet the OCS graduation requirement.</p>	<p>OCS LiveBinder Academic Policy Webinar tab Academic Policy Slides tab</p>